



NEWS RELEASE

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Meeting Our Goal: Hundreds Housed by Veterans Day 2015

Last November, in response to the White House "Ending Veterans' Homelessness Challenge," the City of Eugene and Lane County pledged to house 365 homeless veterans by the end of 2015.

Between November, 2014 and October, 2015, 248 homeless veterans have been housed, and another 51 vets at imminent risk of losing their homes received rental assistance and case management from St. Vincent DePaul, the V.A., the Housing and Community Services Agency, and Housing Our Veterans. "It's exciting that our goal of housing 365 homeless veterans in 2015 is within reach," says Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy, "but we still need to find more units to get us to the finish line. This is one way that we, as a community, can repay our vets for their sacrifices."

Agencies serving homeless veterans are determined to find at least another 66 housing units to meet the goal by year's end. The Veterans' Affairs office and St. Vincent de Paul (SUDP) have grants and support services available to make this work – including St. Vincent's 3-year, \$3,000,000 Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grant -- but ultimately finding affordable units and willing landlords will make all the difference.

"This community wide private/public/nonprofit effort is unprecedented, nothing short of phenomenal," observes County Commissioner Pat Farr. Thanks to community-wide efforts, coordinated by the Ending Veterans' Homelessness subcommittee of the Lane County Poverty and Homelessness Board (PHB), and bolstered by a community-wide Homeless Veterans Summit on June 1, 2015, much has been accomplished, including:

- Streamlined cooperative efforts by the Veterans' Affairs Behavioral Health team, the St. Vincent de Paul SSVF program, the Housing and Community Services Agency (HACSA) of Lane County, the Housing our Veterans program, City and County offices and area landlords.

- Targeted outreach to landlords, including personal outreach by Eugene Mayor Piercy and County Commissioner Pat Farr, a mass mailing to all landlords, and incentives for landlords, based on contributions from Rotary Club supporters and La Perla restaurant.
- The establishment of a Veterans' rest stop, a joint effort by the Eugene Mission and Community Supported Shelters (C.S.S.), utilizing C.S.S. Conestoga huts.
- The establishment of Operation 365 Veterans' web site, Facebook page and veterans' rental assistance fund. The fund, administered by St. Vincent de Paul, has been used to assist dozens of veterans at imminent risk of homelessness to retain their housing.
- An innovative House-to-Single Room Occupancy (SRO) conversion project. This pilot project upgraded facilities to make them viable for using section 8 subsidized housing or VASH (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) vouchers. This provides a steady rental payment stream for veterans, helping them to stabilize their lives in a sustainable manner that allows them to build a rental history. Housing Our Veterans has opened the first conversion, and is moving forward on purchasing and converting another house in the Santa Clara area over the next few months.

This work with homeless veterans is one important step in addressing homelessness more broadly in our community. Along with the city of Portland, Eugene is recognizing homelessness as an emergency that needs our focused attention. Lane County's homeless population exceeds 1,450 on any given night. The partners involved are actively looking for funding sources and other support to help leverage the lessons learned in working with veterans this year, to apply them toward rescuing more of our vulnerable community members from homelessness, especially as winter rapidly approaches.

Property owners and managers wanting more details on housing veterans are encouraged to contact Tonya Cates at St. Vincent de Paul, 541-743-7109, tonya.cates@svdp.us

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